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11 July 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Projected Soviet Bloc and Other Defensive  
Environments through the 1975-1980 Period

REFS : (a) [redacted] dated 14 June 1968  
(b) [redacted] dated 6 May 1968

1. Reference (a) is the OSI response to reference (b) that OSI project the defensive weapons environment of the "Soviet Bloc" and selected other countries into the 1975-1980 time period and endeavor to establish a performance envelope in which a survivable, quick reaction, aerodynamic, reconnaissance vehicle might viably operate. The memorandum goes into considerable detail regarding the uncertainties of the estimates due primarily to the lack of good intelligence plus the fact that projections so far into the future are difficult to make even with good intelligence as a data base.

2. Nevertheless the document does address all of the defensive possibilities and notes that in many regards the projections made are pessimistic from the point of view of OSA's problems. With reference to the USSR, this observation could be designated the "understatement of the year."

3. Two paragraphs of reference (a) sum up the conclusion of the entire document. With reference to the USSR, the last sentence of paragraph 25k states "In general, the capabilities of ABM weapon systems will merge with those of the SA-5 system so as to create an intercept capability able to cope with targets at all regimes of aerodynamic operation." Paragraph 25L states "Outside the USSR, reconnaissance vehicles able to operate at speeds of [redacted] at altitudes above [redacted] [redacted] should be able to operate with relative impunity in the 1975-1980 period. This speed requirement can probably be relaxed to the [redacted] region with the effective use of [redacted]"

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NRO review(s) completed.

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4. Considering first the reconnaissance role outside of the USSR, it is difficult to comprehend a legitimate justification for an advanced concept study other than improvement of the OXCART. There have been, at various times, proposals for increasing speed and altitude of the A-12 which when coupled with the established reliability and capability would appear to make this a survivable reconnaissance platform for the 1975-1980 period. The cost of re-establishing a fabrication facility for the A-12 would unquestionably be considerably less than the cost of a completely new development program in addition to providing a known and demonstrated capability and reliability.

5. The capability of the projected USSR defenses has been so positively stated in paragraph 25k of reference (a) that one can take solace only in the fact that this does represent an estimate based on little intelligence and much speculation. However, before initiating any advanced concept study which could potentially result in a billion dollar program, it would appear to be mandatory to concentrate all effort on acquiring firmer intelligence regarding at least the present USSR defensive capability from which a more realistic projection could be made. It is suggested therefore that rather than attempting to justify an advanced concept study effort, a request be prepared for authorization to focus heavily on acquiring USSR defensive data, be it from  concept or another approach.

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6. In summary, it is recommended that the EXCOM be solicited to approve a performance improvement investigation for the OXCART to be used outside of the "Soviet Bloc" during the 1975-1980 period and concurrently approve the investigation of approaches to collect data on the USSR SA-5 and ABM defenses. This would require peripheral and possible unmanned overflights of the Soviet Union to provoke and collect, but without these data, any advanced concept study may be useless.

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